

THE DROESHOUT PORTRAIT
of
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

AN EXPERIMENT IN IDENTIFICATION

WILLIAM STONE BOOTH

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THE DROESHOUT PORTRAIT
OF
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

AN EXPERIMENT IN IDENTIFICATION
WITH THIRTY-ONE ILLUSTRATIONS

BY
WILLIAM STONE BOOTH

“Look here, upon this picture, and on this”

WILLIAM STONE BOOTH
OF ART
CITY OF BOSTON

BOSTON
W. A. BUTTERFIELD

1911

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DEDICATION.

Whoever will enquire the name of the man to whose generous courage I am indebted for the publication of this book, must suspect it first and prove his suspicion afterwards by spelling it from end to end of this dedication in which it is gratefully inscribed.

*“Shakespeare, that nimble Mercury thy brain
Lulls many hundred Argus-eyes asleep.”*

—THOMAS FREEMAN, 1614.

THE DROESHOUT PORTRAIT

OF

William Shakespeare

The only portrait of the poet whom we know as William Shakespeare which can be unreservedly accepted as an attempt to offer a likeness, truthful or not, is the engraving bearing the name of Martin Droeshout, and prefixed as a frontispiece to the first collected edition of Shakespeare's plays in 1623. This engraving by Droeshout was made for and published by men who knew the poet; that is evident from their explicit statements made in the folio itself.

The drawing made by, or for, Sir William Dugdale (about 1636?), and published in his *History of the Antiquities of Warwickshire* in 1656, purports to represent the Stratford monument as it then stood. Dugdale's drawing of the bust originally to be seen thereon is too crude to afford us safe evidence as to the precise character of that work, but his engraving is presumably more like the bust on the original monument than is the present substitute, to which it bears, in truth, as little resemblance as it does to the portrait by Droeshout which is the basis of our experiment.

All other portraits, sculptured, engraved or painted, have pedigrees which will not bear the test of a scientific scrutiny, and which indeed are one and all lost in the mists of surmise. They were originally the offspring of faith, assumption or fraud.

The problem which I have here brought to a solution is whether this Droeshout portrait is a likeness of the actor of Stratford-on-Avon, or of Francis Bacon, whose name I have shown¹ to be signed through the first spoken lines of the first edition of the collected plays, known as the Folio of 1623.

By his contemporaries, Marston and Hall (1597-9), Bacon was suspected to be the author of *Venus and Adonis*,² and by reason of the evidence which has come to light during the past half century, he has again been suspected to be the author not only of *Venus and Adonis*, but, in the main, of the plays and other poems published under the name of William Shakespeare. It was this evidence which led me to doubt that the actor of Stratford-on-Avon could have been the author of the plays and poems, and to discover if possible whether those works might not be signed internally and secretly with the name of the man suspected. Such I found to be the fact, and in two books³ I have offered proof which has been in some quarters misunderstood, and consequently misrepresented and ridiculed, but which neither has been nor can be refuted.

The discovery of this signature, methodically arranged in the text, cast grave suspicion on other features of the Folio, and, among them, on the portrait of the poet used as its frontispiece.

In the following pages I have shown this accepted portrait of Shakespeare in such combinations with the authentic contemporary portrait of Bacon as to leave no reasonable doubt, after the examination of the other evi-

¹ *The Hidden Signatures of Francesco Colonna and Francis Bacon.* Boston, 1910. Page 11.

² The same, p. 29.

³ *Some Acrostic Signatures of Francis Bacon.* Boston, 1909; and, *The Hidden Signatures of Francesco Colonna and Francis Bacon.*

dence which has been mentioned above, that both were derived from one and the same personality. The notes under each *combination* of portraits will carry the reader along the steps which I have taken. The original portraits under consideration are briefly accounted for on another page.

Even if no doubts as to the actor's authorship had arisen, it would have been an extraordinary phenomenon that the two greatest men of letters of Elizabethan times should be found to have portraits anatomically identical. But doubts *have* arisen, and the case for Bacon *has* been intelligently stated; so the mechanical comparison and identification of the portraits of this suspectedly dual personality became an inevitable step in the examination of the documents.

The characteristic lines of a face constitute a definite linear pattern precisely as do the lines of finger and thumb prints, and my method of identification is like that which is pursued by the police authorities in their use of finger-prints or Bertillon measurements in the identification of criminals. Colouring, beard, hair or wig may change; teeth may fall out; cheeks may sag with age; temples may become hollow; but the underlying bone structure of the face remains unchanged throughout the life of an adult, while its fleshy covering tends to expose its foundations as time passes. The logic of the whole matter lies in having ground for suspicion that the two seemingly different personalities are identical, and in subsequently finding that their finger-prints coincide, that the name of the one is found on the underclothes of the other, and that their portraits bear a close anatomical resemblance to one another.⁴

⁴ Essentially the same method of identification is applied by Prof. R. T. Holbrook in determining the origin of various portraits of Dante. See his illustrated work, *Portraits of Dante from Giotto to Raffael*. (The Medici Society, Ltd. London, 1911.)

The first motion of the mind may prompt some reader to say, "But I know several men the anatomy of whose faces is closely alike, and I could find more. Such likenesses happen every day; and, moreover, the pose is conventional." This kind of logic has served several of the more distinguished of my learned critics. The point here, however, is not that *any* two men *may* look alike, but that two *given* men *do* look alike. It is not that Tennyson was like some other man whom you know to be like Tennyson. Such a statement may carry conviction to the simple mind, but it overlooks the fact that the chances would be large against the existence of any likeness between any two men of letters chosen on account of a discussion of their writings, even were their portraits made in the same conventional pose. The negative instance would add to the force of the evidence.

How this trick of portraiture was done, whether by drawing from a portrait of Bacon as a young man dressed in character for a play⁵ (in which case the stage make-up of a young man would be a secure disguise as a frontispiece for the same man at sixty-three, publishing under a pen-name); whether by a disguised copy of the portrait by Simon Passe, whether by a combination of both, or by working from an original of both, I do not pretend to guess. The tampering with plates is a commonplace in the history of engraving.

That there should have been a motive for the act may be puzzling to those not conversant with the times, but a study of the books on the subject⁶ will suggest several

⁵ For Bacon's practical part in plays see Spedding's edition of Bacon's *Works*, Vol. VIII, pp. 119; 325-343; 374-391. For Bacon's views on the value of the ability to act, see the same, Vol. IV, p. 496. See also the cover of the *Northumberland MS*.

⁶ See the list of books given on the last page of *The Hidden Signatures of Francesco Colonna and Francis Bacon*.

reasonable motives for so careful a mystification. The motives for an act, however, are secondary to the proof that the deed was done; and it is with that proof alone that I am at present concerned.

To sum up: (1) We have established a suspicion of identity between the poet known as William Shakespeare and Francis Bacon. (2) This suspicion is corroborated by the discovery of a structural signature of Francis Bacon in the works of the poet. (3) We see that the portrait of the poet, used as a frontispiece to the plays in which Bacon's structural signature is found, is anatomically identical with the portrait of the man bearing the name so signed.

It may, therefore, be now held that the identity of the poet, whose portrait is used as a frontispiece to the First Folio, with Francis Bacon, whose structural signature is typographically arranged in that Folio, is established beyond the peradventure of a reasonable doubt.

The Portraits Under Consideration

(A.) The figure that was cut for gentle Shakespeare and which bears underneath it the name of Martin Droeshout. This portrait, so far as we know, appeared for the first time in the first collected edition of *Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories and Tragedies*, published in 1623. Facing it is a stanza signed by B. I., which are the initials of Ben Jonson, who wrote a long, complimentary poem in the front of the same Folio, and dedicated it to the memory of his "beloved, the author Mr. William Shakespeare."

(B.) Sir Francis Bacon, from the engraving signed by Simon Passe, presumably made while Bacon was Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, and before he had been created Baron Verulam of Verulam. That is to say, between January 4 and July 12, 1618. Bacon was then fifty-eight years of age. The frontal plane closely approximates that of the Droeshout Shakespeare. The sagittal plane turns a trifle more to the left.

(C.) Lord Verulam, from the engraving bearing the name of Will. Marshall, and dated 1640. On page 33. I have shown that the face in this engraving is a direct copy from the face in Passe's engraving. Marshall has deepened the shadows of the face, and has thereby enabled us to see the anatomy more clearly. The details, other than those of the face, have been freely handled. Bacon is seated at a desk, and his portrait is reversed. The planes of this face are necessarily the same as those in the Passe engraving.

(*D.*) Lord Verulam, from the engraving by W. H. Worthington, which was published by William Pickering in 1826. This engraving purports to have been drawn from one of the pictures supposititiously assigned to Van Somer. I have used it in connection with the contemporary engraving by Passe, because it may be supposed to give a fairly accurate presentation of the facial anatomy of the original. It shows Bacon without a hat, and, therefore, gives us a chance to see his tall brow. The frontal plane is tilted up and the nose is consequently foreshortened. The sagittal plane is turned a little to the right of the same plane in the engravings by Passe and Marshall.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge my indebtedness to Mr. Octave Henri Bourdon, of the Notman Photographic Company of Boston, for the care and skill with which he has co-operated in the making of these pictures and their composites.

With the exception of No. 20, all portraits are reduced so that the distance between each pair of eyes is equal to the distance between each other pair.

To the Reader.

This Figure, that thou here seest put,
It was for gentle Shakespeare cut;
Wherein the Grauer had a strife
with Nature, to out-doo the life :
O, could he but haue drawne his wit
As well in brasse, as he hath hit
His face, the Print would then surpass
All, that vvas euer vvrit in brasse.
But, since he cannot, Reader, looke
Not on his Picture, but his Booke.

B. I.

NOTE.—This is usually assumed to have been written by Ben Jonson, and has been accepted on its “face” value, but I suggest the following interpretation which is in keeping with Ben Jonson’s habit of innuendo and is not out of keeping with the facts :—

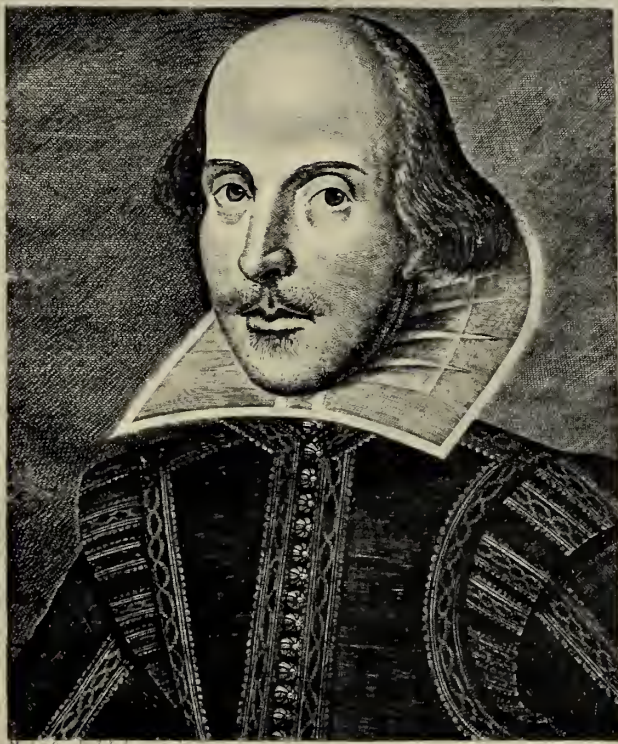
“This picture which you see here was cut for gentle [well-born] Shakespeare. In cutting it the engraver had a strife with nature to out-do the life [to outstrip or exceed nature, and produce a caricature, the Droeshout portrait]. Had he [the engraver] been able to draw Shakespeare’s wit in brass as successfully as he has hit [caricatured] his face, the print would then surpass all that was ever writ in brass [it would indeed be *aere perennius*; *i. e.*, more lasting than bronze]. But since he [the engraver] could not do this, reader, look rather on the book than on the picture.”

In 1578 Hilliard painted a miniature of Francis Bacon at eighteen years of age, and wrote above it “*Si tabula daretur digna Animum mallet!*” “If a picture really worthy of him must be given, I would rather it were a picture of his mind!” Had B. I. seen that miniature? He plays with the same thought.

MR. WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARES

COMEDIES,
HISTORIES, &
TRAGEDIES.

Published according to the True Originall Copies.



L O N D O N
Printed by Isaac Iaggard, and Ed. Blount. 1623

Portrait Under Consideration
(A) The Droeshout *Shakespeare*





Portrait Under Consideration
 (B) The Simon Passe Bacon

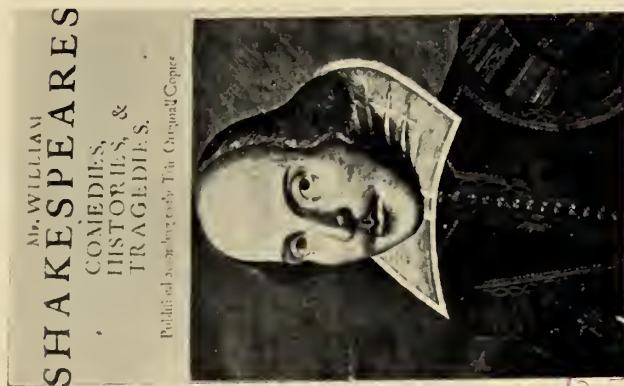


Portrait Under Consideration
(C) The Marshall *Bacon*, after Simon Passe



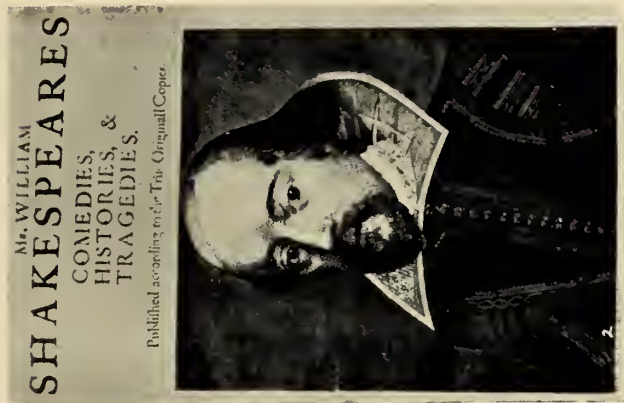


Portrait Under Consideration
(D) The Worthington *Bacon*



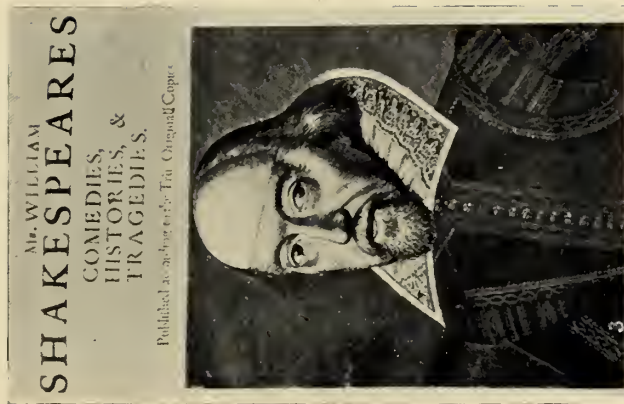
1

The Droeshout Shakespeare.



2

The Droeshout Shakespeare overlaid by Worthington's face and beard of Bacon.



3

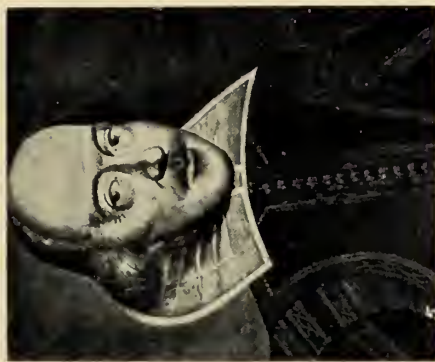
The Droeshout Shakespeare overlaid by Passe's face, hair, and beard of Bacon.





4

The Droeshout Shakespeare overlaid by Passe's Bacon. Note the alignment of eyebrows, nose and cheek.



5

The Droeshout Shakespeare reversed and overlaid by the nose, eyes and temple of Passe's Bacon reversed. Note left eyebrow and the shadow on right cheek. Compare with No. 6.



6

The Droeshout Shakespeare reversed and overlaid by the mouth and beard from Marshall's Bacon. Note alignment of mouth and neck. Compare with No. 5.

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7

The Droeshout Shakespeare overlaid by the upper half of *Passé's* Bacon. Compare with No. 8, for line from the lobe of nose.



8

The Droeshout Shakespeare overlaid by upper two thirds of *Passé's* Bacon. Compare with 7, for shadow of cheek-bone and lobe of nose.



9

The Droeshout Shakespeare reversed and overlaid above the mouth by Marshall's Bacon. Note the line of chin.



10

The Droeshout Shakespeare reversed and overlaid by the brow and hat of Marshall's Bacon. Note alignment of hair and eyebrows.



11

The Marshall Bacon reversed and overlaid by three quarters of the Droeshout Shakespeare face and hair. Note alignment of eyebrow, nose and mouth ; also difference of the sagittal plane.



12

The Droeshout Shakespeare overlaid by the eye, cheek and hair of Passe's Bacon. Note the cheek line, and shadows.



13

Passe's Bacon overlaid by an oblique sagittal section of the Droeshout Shakespeare's face. Note the alignment of eye, nose and mouth.



14

The Marshall Bacon overlaid by upper oblique section of the Droeshout Shakespeare's face reversed. Note the shadow of brow and temple.



15

The Marshall Bacon overlaid by the upper two thirds of the Droeshout Shakespeare reversed. Note the shadows of the temple and cheek, also the hair.



16

The Marshall Bacon overlaid by the lower part of the Worthington Bacon. Showing similarity of sagittal plane.



17

The Marshall Bacon overlaid by the vertical half of the Worthington Bacon. Showing dissimilarity of frontal plane.



18

The Marshall Bacon for comparison with the two preceding.





19

The Passe Bacon overlaid by the brow of the Worthington Bacon.



20

The Passe Bacon overlaid by the brow and hair of the Droeshout Shakespeare, focussed to the line of the hair.



21

The Passe Bacon reversed and overlaid by the face of the Droeshout Shakespeare, also reversed.



22

The Marshall Bacon overlaid by the middle section of the Droeshout Shakespeare's face. Note the line from the lobe of the nose.



23

The brow and hair of the Droeshout Shakespeare overlaid by the corresponding section of the Worthington Bacon reversed. Note the hair.



24

The Droeshout Shakespeare reversed and overlaid with the eyes of the Worthington Bacon.



25



26



27

The Passe Bacon reversed, in combination with the Marshall Bacon. Showing that Marshall copied the face of the Passe engraving. Marshall's engraving is on top, and the turned flaps expose the engraving by Passe.



Ad D[ominum] B[aconum(?)].

Si bene qui latuit, bene vixit, tu bene vivis
Ingeniumque tuum grande latendo patet.¹

¹This *Dominus B.* was one of a group of noblemen, great ladies and courtiers to whom epigrams were addressed by John Owen. (*Joannis Audoeni Epigrammatum Libri Tres. Londini, 1606.*) There was but one man of great genius in the Court circles of those days whose name began with a *B*, and who was reputed a concealed poet and a great wit; and that man was Francis Bacon. It is possible that there was another man of great but concealed genius at the time whose name did begin with *B*, but it has not come down to us. I here apply the epigram to Francis Bacon. It fits him.

“ If he who has hid well has lived well, you live well
And your great genius is the more open for being hid.”



